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The Child Learns About Animals

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The Child Learns About Animals

By Lorraine Sandstrom

THE child will see everything in his environment, physical or social, whether it be the running of ponies or the swaying of leafy branches in the trees. He will hear everything from the laughter of the neighborhood children to the singing of a canary bird. He will touch, whether it be with his cheek, toe, finger or tongue, the smooth round stem of a dandelion, the soft fur of a kitten, or the sticky coldness of an icicle. He is ready for experience with everything around him, and if he is energetic he will set out by himself to have this.

In the Nursery School at Iowa State College we are able to observe the child at various provided opportunities he finds for learning about this environment. What he learns through contact with animals is quite noticeable. Once a big rabbit strayed into the yard. Joyful cries of "See the bunny" and "Catch him to keep him" ensued. Billy had the thrill of getting near enough to touch him. "I caught him, didn't I?" The rest of the children were sure that he had. Therefore Billy became the day's hero. Some children, especially the smaller ones, fed the pet bunny nearly every day. Joan and Bill discovered that he ate grass and clover as well as lettuce and carrots. When Joan eats her own lettuce at lunch time, she often remarks, with a rabbit-like chewing movement, "I eat it like the bunny does."

Birds are always a sort of field of research for the child as he goes about his business. Mary Ann discovered a sparrow clinging to the side of the brick wall. She called several children's attention to it. They closely watched it until it released its interesting grip on the bricks and flew away. Perhaps this was the first time a sparrow had ever done that!

There is a large bird house in one corner of the lawn. Often little heads are turned upward for several minutes to see if the martens will soon fly in or out of the doors.

Little Harold was seen chasing two blackbirds away from a low branch of berries. He laughed aloud when they flew. Was this laugh an indication that he had felt pleasure from his own power? Or are blackbirds only funny out-of-reach playthings to Harold?

Sally climbed from one branch to another in a low tree. "See, I'm getting so I can do this like a bird flies."

The pet canary offers a fine opportunity for teaching children how and why to care for pets. The older children are, of course, more interested in the actual care of him. They often teach the younger children how to get the fresh water, or how to fold a clean paper "just so" in the bottom of his cage.

When he refuses to bathe in his specially provided bird-bath, the children enjoy the privilege of giving him a shower bath by sprinkling water with their fingers. Edwin asked if the teacher thought the canary would like being put under the hose. Jean said, "He ducks like it's raining." Peter assumes a part of the adult responsibility by always asking to help the teacher carry the cage.

The gold fish are often patiently watched for several minutes. Peter and Marilyn were given chances to use the net to catch them. Peter was very conscientious about the fish's inability to live out of water. He merely held him imprisoned under the water.

Billy often asks for the song about the "merboy", who said,

"And I would wear a swordfish,
And gently feed and pat,
The dog-fish and the cat-fish,
They'd be my dog and cat."

Some of the older children were taken on a trip to the barns. Much interest was found in the goats and sheep. When Edwin saw the pens, he asked where "Billy Goat Gruff's Bridge" was. This familiar story had meant more to him than just words.

Many authorities feel that the child under nine is better off without the exclusive ownership of live pets because until the child is older he really has not developed enough of the fostering instinct toward animals. However, the child need not be deprived in any way of the opportunities of learning about them. Under the close supervision, he can learn much about animal nurture, and service to others. Angelo Patre has said, "Children should have a chance to become acquainted with animals, if their happiness is to be complete."

Art Expression

(Continued from page 10)

suitable for it are also stressed by him. Only by considering both may a logical and satisfactory result be secured. These ideas are held by all good designers.

The South Kensington Museum of London has a collection of wood cuts made by the pupils of Cizek. Would that each country might have a national museum for the work of its children. It is so spontaneous, so free, so unhampered by adult laws of expression if it is done under a spirit akin to that of Cizek.

NOTE: The Applied Art Department has in the exhibit room of Home Economics Hall an exhibit of reproductions of the work of Cizek's pupils. This was obtained from the Iowa Library Commission at Des Moines from Miss Julia Robinson. The transportation charges both ways only need to be paid. Such an exhibit is a real source of inspiration to both children and adults.

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